



are we keeping pace?

MASTER PLANS

What is a master plan?

A master plan is a blueprint for a community or neighborhood. The plan establishes a long-term vision for a place; it determines how the land will be used, where buildings, streets, and parks will go, and where people will live and work. It synthesizes the public's aspirations for an area and describes how goals will be implemented over time through clearly defined steps. A master plan involves the community in helping to define the vision and is a collaborative effort involving property and business owners, residents, planners and policy makers. The vision and recommendations of the master plan guide the regulatory review process. Siting of developments, subdivision of land and other actions affecting a community must conform to the recommendations of the applicable master plan. A master plan does not guarantee redevelopment and it cannot require construction of capital projects. A master plan does not address the operational aspects of local government, like traffic signals, public safety response times or school boundaries.

What does the Planning Department do?

The Planning Department creates great communities by developing master plans, reviewing applications for development and analyzing various types of information to help public officials plan for Montgomery County's future. Each community within Montgomery County has a master plan that establishes a comprehensive approach to land use and future development. The Planning Department is organized by geographical areas within the County:

- Planning Area 1 (Inside the Beltway)
- Planning Area 2 (Central County Communities)
- Planning Area 3 (Northern County Communities and Agricultural Reserve).

What does the Planning Board do?

The Montgomery County Planning Board, together with the County Planning and Parks Departments and their counterparts in Prince George's County, are all part of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The Montgomery County Planning Board has five members who are appointed by the County Council for staggered, four-year terms. Planning Board members may serve a maximum of two full terms, and no more than three members may belong to the same political party.

The Planning Department staff works for the Planning Board. The Board recommends master plans to the County Council, reviews development applications and mandatory referrals, and helps preserve historic resources. The Board is also responsible for the development and management of Montgomery County's nationally recognized 34,00-acre park system.

What are the active plans within Montgomery County?

Currently underway are master plans for Downtown Bethesda, Greater Lyttonsville, Montgomery Village, Westbard, Sandy Spring Rural Village and Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment.

What impact does the work of the Planning Board and Planning Department have on my life?

The Planning Board helps shape the future of communities in the county...where you live, work and play. Montgomery County has a great quality of life – from open spaces and park amenities to vibrant downtown centers of activity. The Board and the work of the Planning and Parks Departments help to ensure that the county stays that way. Walk around downtown Bethesda and Silver Spring, for example, and you will notice that these areas are a lot livelier than in the past. This vibrancy did not just happen – the communities were planned that way.

How can a county resident get involved in the planning process?

The planning process relies on community participation and residents are the best experts on their neighborhoods. We invite the public to meetings, workshops and happy hours to listen and learn about plans, raise concerns and discuss strategies. We also ask for feedback through online polls and questionnaires. There are many ways to get involved with planning efforts and stay up to date on news and information. Check out our website: montgomeryplanning.org, follow us on Twitter: @montgomeryplans and like us on Facebook: facebook.com/montgomeryplanning